

FATALITY



AFZF-GA-SAFE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056



1 April 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Training Accidents -- Fatality Memo 02-07

1. During recent training at the National Training Center, a mortar round exploded inside a mortar track, resulting in the death of three III Corps soldiers. There was a misfire, misfire procedures were conducted, and the round exploded. These great soldiers were doing their duty. This terrible accident is still under investigation and the contributing factors are not yet known. While my safety thoughts, below, are not keyed to this incident, I wanted to share them with you because safety cannot be overemphasized.
2. We are all in a very dangerous profession and one that has inherent high risks. Standards exist in our regulations, manuals, SOPs, and doctrinal publications as checks and balances to counter training challenges and risks. Caring and knowledgeable leaders continuously teach these standards to their soldiers to ensure successful missions and to minimize losses. Our commanders/senior leaders are charged with ensuring that the junior NCOs/officers are effectively training their soldiers and crews to perform to established standards. This is the only way we can mitigate the real and present dangers associated with Army service.
3. Crew success can normally be measured by the adequacy of crew training. My sense is that synchronized crews that operate like well-greased machinery probably have spent a lot of hours together learning and rehearsing training procedures. Leaders who are 100% engaged and committed have a positive impact on this synchronization by infusing correct standards and experience into the crew training. I expect commanders to frequently seize training opportunities to reinforce crew and system-specific safety procedures and standards.
4. Risk Management must be second nature - a way of life. We must always use the standard five-step risk management process outlined in FM 100-14 in order to successfully and safely accomplish our missions/activities. Commanders must ensure that annual risk management training is scheduled and conducted IAW III Corps Regulation 350-1. We have to know the provisions of equipment TMs and FMs cold, particularly misfire procedures.
5. Training for combat has inherent high level hazards; however, established standards ensure the best opportunity for safe missions.

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B. B. BELL
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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